

PERSIAN ORNAMENT.

in Persia, which, doubtless, were widely disseminated in Mohammadan countries, would readily spread the influence of this mixed style. The decorations of the houses of Cairo and Damascus, the mosques and fountains of Constantinople more especially, exhibit this mixed style; groups of natural flowers are constantly found growing from a vase and enclosed in panels of conventional Arabian ornament. The ornament of modern India also feels this ever-present influence of the Persian mixed style. In a book-cover from the India House (Plates LIII. and LIV.) is an example of this; the outside is treated in the pure Arabian manner, whilst the inside (Plate LIV.) is quite Persian in character.

The ornaments on Plate XLIV., from illuminated MSS. in the British Museum, present also the mixed character we have referred to. The geometrical patterns are purely conventional ornament, and have great affinity with the Arabian, but are less perfect in distribution. Nos. 1-10, on the contrary, are from backgrounds of pictures, representing tapestry on the walls; they possess great elegance, and the masses are well contrasted with the grounds.

The patterns on Plate XLV. are chiefly representations of pavements and dados, and probably were intended for glazed tiles so abundantly used by the Persians. Compared with the Arabian and Moresque mosaics, they exhibit a marked inferiority, both in the distribution of form and in the arrangement of colour; it will be observed that, throughout our Persian subjects, the secondary and tertiary colours are much more dominant than in the Arabian (Plate XXXIV.), or in the Moresque, where blue, red, and gold, are the prevailing harmonies, and, as may be seen at a glance, with much-increased effect.

The ornaments on Plate XLVI. have a much greater affinity with the Arabian: Nos. 7, 16, 17, 21, 23-25, are very common ornaments for the heads of chapters in Persian MSS., indeed there is but little variety to be found in these, numerous as they are. Compared with the Arabian MSS. (Plate XXIV.), a great similarity will be found in all the leading lines of the construction of the ornaments, and also in the surface decoration of the ornaments themselves; but the masses are much less evenly distributed. However the same general principles prevail.

Plates XLVII. and XLVII*, are arranged from a very curious Persian book at South Kensington Museum, which appears to be a manufacturer's pattern-book. The designs exhibit much elegance, and there is great simplicity and ingenuity displayed in the conventional rendering of natural flowers. Both these Plates and Plate XLVIII. are very valuable, as showing the extreme limit of this conventional rendering, reached, but not exceeded. When natural flowers are used as decoration, and subjected to a geometrical arrangement, they can have neither shade nor shadow, as was the case with the later MSS. of the Mediæval School, see Plate LXXIII.; without falling under that reproach so justly due to the floral papers and floral carpets of modern times. The ornament at the top of Plate XLVIII., which forms the title-page to the book as well as the borders throughout, present that mixed character of pure ornament, arranged in conjunction with the ornamental rendering of natural forms, which we have considered as characteristic of the Persian style, and which, we think, renders it so much inferior to the Arabian and the Moresque.

